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Budd, Tillis, Colleagues Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Help Restore Access to WNC Homes

Washington, D.C. — Senator Ted Budd (R-NC), Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), Rep. Chuck Edwards (R-NC), and Don Davis (D-NC) have introduced the Restoring Access to Mountain Homes Act.

The bill allows Public Assistance funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to be used for permanent repair of private roads and bridges that Hurricane Helene destroyed. Private roads and bridges provide access to and from many mountain homes.

Background:

- FEMA Individual Assistance is capped at $42,500 for all expenses.
- The cost to rebuild private roads and bridges often exceeds this amount.
- The state of NC estimates a $350 million gap between what is funded and what is required to rebuild the private roads and bridges relied on by many in mountainous regions.
- The *Restoring Access to Mountain Homes Act* will help fill this gap by allowing FEMA public assistance to cover these costs.

Senator Budd said in a statement:

"Mountain homes often require private roads and bridges to connect their property to main roads and highways. Given FEMA's Individual Assistance cap and the extensive cost of rebuilding these access points, I am proud to propose a bill that will allow the people of Western North Carolina to use Public Assistance dollars to regain access to their homes."

Senator Tillis said:

“Hurricane Helene caused widespread devastation, leaving many communities in Western North Carolina severely impacted and cut off from one another. This commonsense legislation ensures that FEMA public assistance funding can be used to repair private roads and bridges destroyed by the hurricane, allowing families in the hardest-hit areas to reconnect to main roads and highways as they continue to recover.”

Rep. Edwards said:

"Every disaster response official I’ve heard from agrees on one thing: Hurricane Helene destroyed the greatest number of private roads and bridges they’ve ever seen in one disaster. We’re entering month six since Helene hit our mountains, and there are still folks with limited access to many of our mountain homes. The Restoring Access to Mountain Homes Act would ease the burden on WNC families by allowing NCDOT and local governments to be reimbursed by FEMA for any repairs they make to private roads or bridges. The federal support provided in this bill is critical to making sure Western North Carolina can be rebuilt.”

Rep. Davis said:

“The Restoring Access to Mountain Homes Act will provide local governments and the NC Department of Transportation the authority to repair essential infrastructure and receive reimbursement for those efforts, helping to ensure a smoother return to safety, stability, and peace of mind for those who depend on these vital connections to get to work, school, and go about their daily lives. We must ensure a timely and effective recovery for western NC.”

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